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TENNESSEE FARM WOMEN ARE WORKING
FOR MORE COMFORTABLE HOMES

A radio talk by Lillian L. Keller, Specialist in Clothing and Home Improvement, Knoxville, Tennessee, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour, May 6, 1936, and broadcast by a network of 45 associate NBC radio stations.

Our sympathies have often been enlisted by stories of European nobility being obliged to give up their baronial castles because they could no longer maintain them, or old families of New England or Virginia having to sell their ancestral acres and find new places to live.

A similar heart-stirring story has been enacted recently in the Tennessee Valley. When Norris Dam was completed and the water gates shut, the upper waters of Cove Creek and Clinch River flooded an area of some 34,200 acres. Last summer 3,000 families lived more or less happily and contentedly on little hill and valley farms throughout all this area. All but two of these families were of pure Anglo-Saxon blood, 30% of them were tenants who moved from place to place, but 70% owned and probably loved their own homes. The ancestors of some of these people had lived on the same farms for more than 200 years.

One of the stupendous tasks of the T.V.A. was to persuade these land owners to sell their land and find homes in other parts of Tennessee. Every family in the water area was visited by an extension worker cooperating with the T.V.A. These workers even helped the families to choose from among their possessions the few choice articles that might be best to take with them and often showed them how to renovate these articles. As soon as these people were relocated, their names were sent to the University of Tennessee extension workers of the county, the women were asked to become members of home demonstration clubs and these new comers became once more a part of the farm home betterment movement of Tennessee.

During the past ten years I have visited something like 1,000 farm homes in our state. Some of them I have watched grow from bare, unattractive eating and sleeping places to comfortable and often beautiful homes.

In Hawkins County one farm woman has been longing and working for running water in her home. Last week she told me that during the past year she had made and sold \$100 worth of walnut buttons. Perhaps you have seen some of these unusual buttons on the swanky Fifth Avenue dresses, for some of these very walnut shell buttons are now being sold in Rockefeller Center in New York City. (If you happen to have some imagination you may be reminded of the fairy story in which water ran out of a walnut shell as you think of the Hawkins County woman who is soon to have running water from walnut shell buttons.)

Last year 1508 Tennessee farm homes installed running water and 3,060 electricity. Statistics, yes, but they mean 1508 fewer women carrying water from the spring 200 or more feet away and perhaps 10,000 fewer

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lamps to be cleaned and filled. (Did you ever clean a lamp?)

The work of the University of Tennessee Extension Service is to help farm women analyze their needs, choose the greatest of them and work toward it. There is no wholesale propaganda for electric equipment. For some farm homes on their present income this is still a step too far.

Many more immediate and less expensive needs of farm homes are being met.

In the past two years 1500 cotton mattresses have been made in the rural homes of Tennessee. Even when the cotton has to be bought (it is usually home grown) the mattresses are made at a saving of \$12 apiece.

Just week before last the home demonstration agent and I made the first cotton mattress ever made in DeKalb County, with 25 farm women and four men watching and helping. The woman to whom it belonged had saved the cotton for two years in the hope that an extension worker might come to show her how to make a mattress like one she had seen in a farm home in an adjoining county.

The cotton mattresses made in Tennessee the past two years saved farm families \$18,000, enough to pay a home demonstration agent's salary for 8 or 9 years.

More livable living rooms, more convenient kitchens, more attractive yards and gardens, bath rooms, running water, these are some of the needs that have been met!

I wish you could have gone with me on just one of the Better Homes tours held last week in nearly every one of the ninety-five counties in Tennessee. New kitchen windows looking out, on lovely lavender iris beds, sinks and drain boards no longer at back breaking heights or in dark corners, refinished furniture, home made slip covers and studio-couches, ladder back chairs with new shuck bottoms, back yards turned into play grounds or out-door living rooms, these I should like to show you.

I should like to show you, too, some of Tennessee's homes which need little or no improvement - lovely old Colonial homes in counties adjoining those where Andrew Jackson's Hermitage and the old Sam Davis home are still show places. Some of these have recently been restored to their old time beauty, in fact one of these was visited last Thursday by 220 farm women on a Better Homes tour in Giles County. But that's another story!

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